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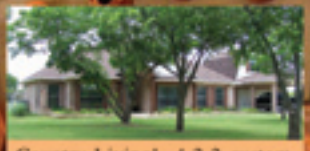

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of $35 per year or $3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 875-3299 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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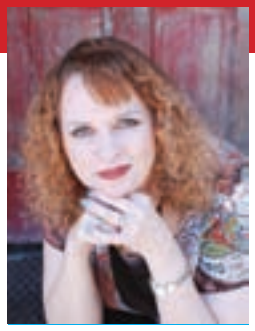
On The Cover

Santa is coming to town!
Photo by Lauren De Los Santos.

Editor's Note



Feliz Navidad, Readers!

We may not be anticipating a white Christmas, still it is beginning to look a lot like Christmas. After all, it is the most wonderful time of the year. The Lights of Ennis are transforming our city into a winter wonderland.

Do you hear what I hear? Christmas bells are ringing as local choirs prepare to sing about the first Noel. Come on now, don't be a Grinch. Even if you don't want nuttin' for Christmas, this is the time of the year to remember the night of the dear Savior's birth.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas at the Ennis Public Theatre's production of *My Favorite Christmas!* I will be home for Christmas, because there will be parties for hosting and presents on the tree. Frosty the Snowman may not visit us, but there is someone on the housetop — must be Santa!

We wish you a merry Christmas!
Kelly Kovar
EnnisNOW Editor
kkovar@nowmagazines.com

We would like to wish you and your family a Happy and Safe Holiday Season!

Dr. Harper's staff of patient care coordinators include (left to right) Krystal McCollum, Tina Gonzales and Michele Spence. His experienced staff assist Dr. Harper in immediate and long-term management during the healing phase after surgery. Venisa Tacker (far right), office and financial manager, has extensive knowledge regarding insurance and financing for all treatment procedures.

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Third Generation Santa

— By Janice C. Coleman

You might have seen Santa around Ennis and not recognized him. From January through November, when he is not listening to children's wish lists, most people know him as Ron Kohlmann. Other men may dress up as Santa Claus for one reason or another, but unlike the rest, Ron was actually born into the Santa line. In the early 1950s, Ron's grandfather, Henry Kohlmann Sr. of Illinois, had begun making Santa visits to local homes for mentally handicapped children. Ron was born several years later. A treasured family photo shows him, shortly before his first Christmas, sitting on the lap of his Grandpa Santa.

"When I got old enough to know what was going on," he said, "I would go along as his helper. I was 8 or 9 years old. That's where I learned how to play Santa — what to say and what not to say." Years later, as Henry Sr.'s health failed, Ron's father Henry "Bud" Jr. started filling in for him. Then in 1978, Henry Sr. passed away. Bud inherited the red suit — and teenage Ron's assistance.

As the two brought Christmas cheer to community and charitable groups, some families also started to request an "early visit" from Santa Claus. Bud and Ron were not content to come into a home and merely hand out presents from under the tree. Instead, they asked the parents to tag the gifts, hide them in large plastic bags and place them outside. Ron would help his father load the packages into his giant toy bag, then Santa would knock at the front door.

When he came in, he called the children by name and passed out their gifts. "The kids would just freak out because Santa Claus knew who they were," Ron said.

The children would tell their friends about Santa's visit. "Word of mouth got around, and we got pretty busy," Ron said. "It was worth it just to see the kids' faces light up when they opened the door and there's Santa Claus." Ron recalled one private party he helped with when he was home on leave from the Navy. After the gifts were loaded into the toy bag, Ron went to the front door while Santa waited out of sight. The parents let the uniformed sailor in and introduced him as a friend of the family. Moments later there was another knock at the door, and the parents sent the children to open it. Ron remembers sitting back and watching the children's amazement when Santa himself walked in. "The kids asked me, 'Wow, did you see

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Solanki, M.D. specializes and is board certified in Internal Medicine, Medical Oncology and Hematology. Dr. Solanki was Professor of Medicine at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine and also held academic appointments at Georgetown University School of Medicine. He currently sees patients at Texas Oncology—Corsicana, Methodist Charlton Cancer Center, and Ennis Doctors Center.

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Santa Claus? Look what he gave me!' and I told them, 'Yes — isn't that something?' They had no clue I was connected. I had brought a camera so I said, 'Here — I'll take some pictures.'"

Unfortunately, Bud's health declined and he had to stop being Santa. Ron, who still has his grandfather's original suit, has been the only Santa in his family for over 20 years. In the spring of 2008, Ron's father passed away, making Christmas that year a bittersweet one for the family.

Since moving to the Ennis area, Ron has been a patient of Dr. William Davis's Chiropractic Clinic. In 2007, Ron told "Doc" about his other life as

Santa. "We got to talking about it and we decided to start doing this [food drive]. You know, it's something that helps the community. Plus the kids get a picture taken with Santa Claus. Doc will go ahead and print them out on the computer right away and give them to the parents."

Ron's most vivid memory is of a party in Sweetwater, Texas, where he lived at the time. He was presiding as Santa in a home for mentally handicapped adults. Each of the men received a wallet. Ron kept noticing one resident in particular, "a gentleman, probably in his mid-40s. But because of his handicap he was really on the level of a 6- or 7-year-old. I happened to have a little toy truck with me, and I gave him that [along with] the wallet. His

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face just lit up — I mean, he sat on the floor playing with it, saying, 'Look what Santa gave me!' Just to see the glow in his eyes and the smile on his face, I'll never forget that. It was worth the whole night right then and there."

And that is what makes this volunteer Santa tick: seeing the joy in children's faces. "I don't know who loves it more, them or me. I get so much enjoyment out of watching them; it's just fun. I try to work it around my work schedule, but if I have to take time off, I will — just because I love it so much."

"It's like my Grandpa said: 'When you're doing this, you just never grow up.'"

Perhaps there is something special about that well-worn red suit. Ron remembered years after Henry Sr. passed away, standing in the background at events and watching as children whispered their Christmas wishes to Henry Jr. "There were a few times when I could see Grandpa sitting there, even though it was really Dad. I would think, *This is so great.* … I can't even explain it." Santa's magic is still a family affair: Ron's wife, Letha, likes to buy candy canes for him to hand out, and his granddaughter, Jordan Sharrock, dresses as an elf to take her turn at helping Santa.

And now? "I can't wait for December to get here [each year], so I can start again; it's my favorite time of the year." Ron hopes to wear his red suit in this year's Christmas Parade of Lights, and wants everyone to know: "If they need somebody, here I am." Accused of being nothing but a big kid himself, he did not even argue. "That's right," he said. His green eyes sparkled behind official North Pole wire-rimmed glasses. "It's like my Grandpa said: 'When you're doing this, you just never grow up.'" NOW

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Home for the Holidays

— By Kelly Kovar

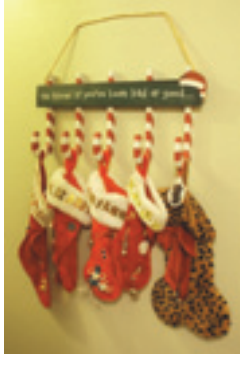
Holiday spirit is something that Chad and Elizabeth Wester like to share with their friends and their family. "We usually have a couple of parties here during Christmas," Elizabeth said. "We always do a neighborhood party, because we are really close to all of our neighbors and spend a lot of time together." The Westers have two girls — BriAnn, a freshman in high school and KayLee, a second-grader. With an upstairs game room, replete in Texas Rangers baseball decor and equipped with games, air hockey, a Sony Wii®, a small soda fridge and

At Home With
Chad and Elizabeth Wester

futons for slumber parties, the neighborhood children — 14 in all — have their own party hangout.

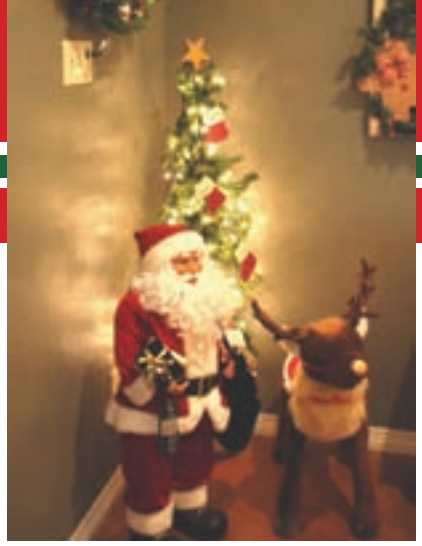
"The game room is more for the kids," Chad explained. "They can come up here; they can play and watch TV, and we can be downstairs. They don't interrupt us or vice versa, but they are still here in the house, and we can check on them if we need to."

Having extended family close by makes holidays much more stress-free and cuts down on travel time. "Both sets of our parents are here," Elizabeth mentioned. "Most of our grandparents are here, too, so we pretty much stay here in Ennis for Christmas." Christmas Eve often finds them at Chad's parents' home. "We have 'Santa Claus' on Christmas morning here at our house. Usually my parents come over for breakfast and see what the kids got; then we go over there in the afternoon for Christmas lunch."



Family traditions are cherished by Chad and Elizabeth both. "We have stockings that have been passed down by my dad's mother, Frances Wester," Chad mentioned. Hung on a special stocking hanger in the hallway, each stocking sports "Granny Wester's" special mementos of each person. Chad's has his class ring whereas Elizabeth's has her wedding photo.

Elizabeth likes to keep organized, whether she doing her job as one of the



office managers at AGTM Engineering, or driving her girls to school, Lionette practice and dance classes. She is the Lionette booster club president and also a PTO officer for Sam Houston Elementary. She and Chad are the entertainment chairmen for Ennis Relay for Life and also operate Custom Sounds, a disc jockey service, on the weekends. The key to keeping things organized is the "mud room."

"This is main central of our house," she said. "This is literally my favorite area of the house. I am such an organized freak." Backpacks, dance bags and coats each have a place. "Everything comes here and nothing goes further than right here. We all have our own hook." Calendars, school items and invitations are neatly grouped here. Chad, an Ennis fireman, even has a cabinet here where he can plug in his chargers and radio scanner. "We usually have the Bardwell Fire Department party at our house," Elizabeth said. Chad volunteers there

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as assistant fire chief, as well as teaching at the Navarro College fire academy.

Even at Christmas, Elizabeth organizes gifts for parents, nieces, nephews and siblings under one tree and then puts immediate family presents under another tree. With over 20 trees on display throughout the home, this is no problem. "We have a tree in every room," Chad agreed. "The tree in the office is decorated with a fire department theme, which coincides with the room's decor. A lot of the fire ornaments I've had since childhood." Some were passed down from Elizabeth's father, who was a fireman before he became city inspector. "Elizabeth even comes down and decorates a tree at the fire station."

Every tree in the house has a different style and coordinates with the room in which it is placed. "My mom likes decorating trees, so she usually comes over and helps me," Elizabeth mentioned. "Chad's mom also really likes to decorate, and I kind of got the multiple-tree idea from her, because she puts up lots of trees." The dining room's light-toned wooden furniture is accented with a tree resplendent in red, silver, snowflakes and glitter.

The cozy family living area sports a country-style tree with old yarn ornaments, little sweater ornaments and little wooden wreaths. Stained concrete floors and an open-living concept make meals a low-maintenance family-affair. "Chad does all the cooking and that is one of the things he wanted, when we built our house five years ago, for the kitchen to be open to the living area," Elizabeth mentioned. Pendant lights on a track over the bar, verde granite countertops and an island-on-wheels all contribute to a living space that makes family gatherings convenient.

The master bedroom, with its iron-and-wood bed,

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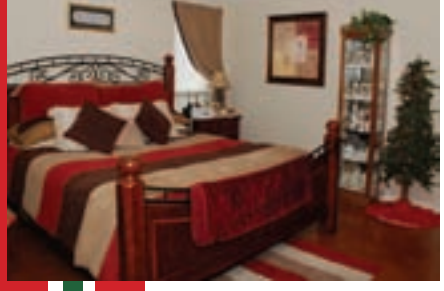
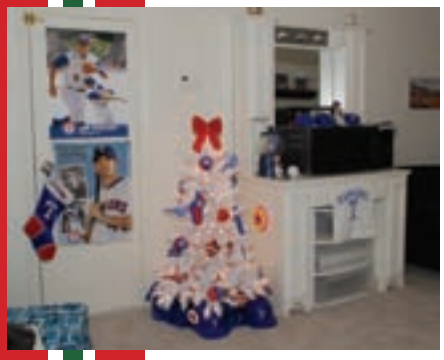
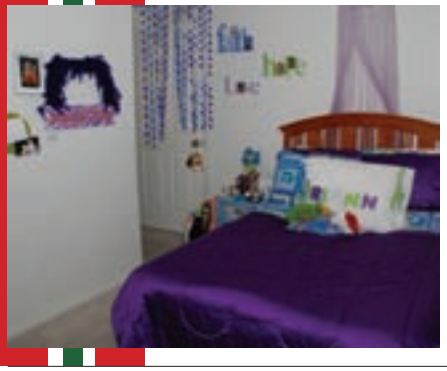


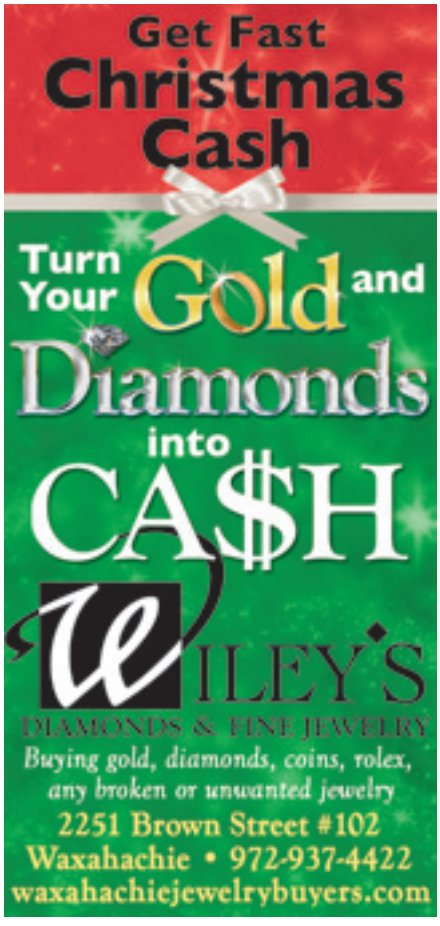




decorated in cinnamon tones, has two trees of its own, each decorated with glass ornaments. The marble counters in the master bath reflect the golden glow of that room's tree. Elizabeth's grandmother's quilt hangs in her bedroom on a quilt hanger made by her father. Beneath it is an heirloom chest. "That was my toy box when I was a child," Chad pointed out. "My grandfather made it." A Willow Tree angel collection in the bedroom coordinates with the Willow Tree nativity in the living room.

BriAnn and KayLee help put a festive spin on their own rooms. "Every year we buy them a Hallmark ornament, and they each have a tree in their room which they decorate," Elizabeth said. KayLee's room has gauzy butterflies suspended from the ceiling which mimic the design in her quilt. Pastel blue and green walls are enlivened by fuchsia accents and her crown/tiara collection — souvenirs of birthday and wedding celebrations. The contemporary flair in BriAnn's room is typified in the turquoise IKEA® nightstand and round turquoise chair. A silky purple bedspread plays off lavender walls. "We dazzled up the green lamp ourselves," Elizabeth demonstrated, "with beads and ribbon." The daughters share a bathroom, jaunty with its lime-green-and-fuchsia-striped shower curtain. "They have a pink, purple and green aluminum tinsel tree for their bathroom."

Elizabeth's Christmas preparations begin the week of Thanksgiving. Chad pulls down box after box from the garage attic, with a friend's help. "It takes me a whole weekend to put it up," she said. "I basically un-decorate the entire house, clearing out everything that can move — ficus trees, rockers, regular decor and then I start." Glass hurricanes filled with balls go on the coffee table, a berry wreath hangs over the fireplace, and a cheery snow globe collection nestles on the end table. In a couple of days, the Westers are ready for the festivities to begin. NOW



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The Ennis Youth Cheerleading Association A Division cheerleaders bundle up before a game.

Tiffany Myers dresses up as Smurfette at the Ennis Doctors Center.

Shirley Thomas and Mary Caverly pose at the Interior Ideas Holiday Open House.

Joe White, Bill Woody, Carol Bush, Dub Maines, Kristin Barton and Carol Bouldin celebrate the pouring of the new foundation at the Ellis County Sub-Courthouse.

Austin Elementary Principal Jan White visits local team Wild for a Cure on day one of the Breast Cancer 3-day.

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Everything in Its Proper Setting

— By Adam Walker

Rickey and Cindy Crenshaw are quite a team. Rickey builds sets for Ennis Public Theatre and Cindy paints scenery and masters props. Between the two of them, they have helped to stage 31 different plays for Ennis Public Theatre and several more for other companies. So how did this team get started? "First, I went just to see a play," Rickey said, "and the director told me after the play, 'We need a guy who laughs like that for our next play,' so I did a cold reading and got the part." The play was *On Golden Pond*.

At one of the practices, Cindy was present when one of the actors lamented that it was too bad they could not have a pond on stage. "Who says you can't?" Cindy asked, and soon she was painting away, creating a pond right on the floor of the stage.

Now, whether salvaging storage units, cruising garage sales or surfing the Internet, Rickey and Cindy are always on the lookout for odds and ends like Houdini handcuffs, mannequins, baseball uniforms, doilies and wooden turtles. They save everything. After all, in their business who knows when they might need a burnt orange couch — again!

If Rickey and Cindy cannot find what they are looking for, then they make it. Cindy has made lamps out of mannequin legs and painted her own Cracker Jack and Nehi signs. Rickey has made car frames out of electrical conduit and vines, which drop from the ceiling from garden hoses. If it is needed, they will manufacture it.

Enter the papier-mâché pickle. Papier-mâché pickle? Oh, yes. The pickle is one of the three "mascots" of the Ennis Public Theatre. "I made the pickle for *The Odd Couple*, and it's been in every play since," Cindy admitted. "The pickle played a cactus in *The Real Cowboy Ain't Dead Yet*. We stuck it in a pot on the window sill." *For Twelve Angry Men*, the pickle had to be hidden inside another prop since the entire set was black and white, but it is always there, just like the other two mascots. "The three-handed frog goes all the way back to *On Golden Pond*," Rickey explained. "It's a rubber frog that's got one foot missing, so the actors call it three-handed." The third mascot is a wooden turtle. Rickey and Cindy claim the mascots bring the actors luck on stage.

Cindy is very careful about details. "She makes flow charts and lists," Rickey said. "The actors call her 'Mother Hen.'" Cindy just likes to be sure that if an actor had a wallet in his pants in act one, that he still has the wallet after he changes costumes for act two. Her checklists help take pressure off the actors, since a missing prop can call for some real creativity on the part of those on stage. Once when Rickey was putting bottles on a shelf for a cabin in the Catskills, Cindy noticed they were Dr Pepper bottles, which would not have been found in the North at that time, so they had to find Coke bottles for authenticity. The same was true for supplying the cabin with plenty of board games to keep the children busy on those rainy days.

Rickey is just as detailed with his sets, making sure there are dead leaves on the roof of the porch and distressing paint jobs so they do not look freshly painted when the set should be old and worn. Lawn chairs should be rusty if they are old. And, as Cindy discovered, a little sawdust can go a long way toward making AstroTurf® look like a real yard.

This Christmas, the theatre will be producing *My Favorite Christmas* written and directed by Bill Rhoten. They have produced the play twice before, so Rickey and

Cindy already know exactly what goes where, right? Not exactly. "It's a little easier since we already know what props are needed and still have most of them," Rickey started. Cindy finished, "But we always change something so it will be fresh, so people won't come and say, 'We already saw this before.'" For this year's set, Rickey has to build a window for Santa to come in and sliding glass doors, and Cindy has to furnish a kitchen and living room for a middle class Southern family. Rickey said one of the most important props is the armoire which was an old schoolhouse cabinet he inherited.

However, according to Cindy, the Bluebell ice cream and Baby Jesus' birthday cake are just as important.

When asked why they do this, they answered, "We want people to have fun. We want them to feel like it's real. We don't ever want people to look at our set and say, 'I wonder why they did that?' We like lots of detail so you get the feel," Rickey continued. "We do it for the patrons. They expect impressive sets, and I don't want to let them down."

"We also do it for the actors, to make others shine," Cindy added. Now when performance day arrives, one question will be on everyone's mind. "I wonder where the pickle is?" NOW

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Fish Tale

— By Kelly Kovar

If you happen to be lunching at the Wildflower Café on a certain day of the week, you might notice an unusual gathering in the back dining room: a lively group of men sharing fish tales over a hearty lunch. "The purpose of this is just for us to get together, and a lot of times we plan and discuss future fishing trips," Gentry Holmes said. "Our club is called The Geezers." Quite a few of these gentlemen are retired, but several are still active in business, banking and ranching in the area.

The conversation ranged from the mundane to the preposterous, as each of the members tried to outdo one another with their stories of hunting and fishing adventures. "Somewhere in the '90s, or even farther back than that, we started meeting for lunch," Jerry Glaspy said.

They all agreed the best fisherman in the bunch is Gary Head. Gary and Neal Blackstone were busy planning a fall fishing trip to Port Mansfield. "It is a 12-hour drive, but really good fishing," Gary said. Gary and Neal like to catch their own bait. "I cast a bait net and catch my bait, usually mullet, when I get to my fishing location."

"Gentry and I own a boat together," Jerry said. "We have a Blue Wave bait boat. "Four can fish comfortably from it." Jerry is the boat captain. A fishing trip usually lasts for several days, and the group rents a house near wherever they are fishing.

"We used to call our boats Geezer I and Geezer II," Gentry said. Trips have often involved taking more than one boat along; between them, they have four fishing boats. "Dr. Ron Oglesby, was the first to get a boat, and then Gordon Crigger got a boat," Gentry said.

"I have a big decal on my boat that says, 'The Geezer Rod and Gun Club,'" Gordon Crigger said. "We all fish, but the club started with hunting quail and pheasant," Gordon explained. "We would hunt all winter, but didn't have anything to do in the summertime, so I came up with the idea of getting together a fishing group to go down to the coast. We went to Rockport and South Padre and did saltwater fishing."

Some of the members still prefer hunting. "Mostly I like to hunt," said Phil Newsome. "Gordon and I used to hunt together as a team all the time. We live next door to each other in Ennis, and we had bird dogs."

Johnny Cody joined the Geezers for lunch. Joe McClendon, who lives in Dallas, often comes down for Geezer's Club get-togethers. Brian Atwood is involved when he lives in Ennis, although he summers in Maryland, where he keeps his sailboat on Chesapeake Bay. "We are hoping to make a trip to Lake Texoma this year, where member Bill Woody's sister has a nice cabin that sleeps 16," Gentry said.

Fishing trips have often taken the Geezers farther afield, to Mexico, Alaska and Canada. "We fished in British Columbia at Salmon King Lodge," Neal said. Neal, Gary, Phil and Gentry still enjoy recalling their adventures in the Great White North.

After flying into Vancouver, they took a smaller plane to Port Hardy. "From Port Hardy, we took a plane that was built in 1938," Gary mentioned. After they flew into British Columbia, the plane landed right in the water.

The trip was unusual, but the accommodations and fishing were first class. "We were fishing in water that was 500-feet-deep and the water was so cold, if you fell in there, you would freeze to death," Gentry mentioned. "We were fishing for salmon, but the best fish we caught were rockfish."

On the way back, they had to fly in an open cockpit plane. "I sat up in the cockpit with the pilot," Phil said. The group put their fish on dry ice and flew them back to Texas.

"We've fished a lot in Mexico," Gentry said. "Neal and Gary used to take their boat and drive down to Sugar Lake or Lake Guerrero in Mexico. Whitey Bob, a real good friend of mine, and I used to go to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Once, we had a great time flying down there, renting a jeep and driving 90 kilometers [56 miles] up the Sea of Cortez to an old fishing lodge."

The camaraderie and good-natured ribbing typical of the group is never-ending. "Last trip we went on," Erv Glaspy recounted, "Gentry was sitting right next to me. I was catching fish, and he wasn't, so he got to griping, and I switched places with him. Did you ever catch a fish, Gentry?" Erv asked.

Of course, Gentry's story was different. "The deal was, Erv had never beat anybody, so I wasn't even baiting my hook," Gentry claimed. "I always catch more fish and the biggest fish. The last time we were at [Lake] Texoma, I caught a fish so big he wouldn't even go in the ice box. We had to put him back. He was over three feet long."

"Don't believe anything he says," Gordon interjected. One thing everyone agrees on is that they do not bring a camera on their fishing trips. They do not want pictures, in order to leave the field wide open for them to make their fish tales as big as they like. NOW

A Family Business

— By Alex Allred

Everything is connected, and no one knows that better than Neal Blackstone at the Medicine Chest in Ennis. He arrived in Ennis in 1969 with a degree in pharmacy from the University of Texas and the promise of a new career. By 1972, Drug Town Pharmacy established both the building and location where Medicine Chest sits today. But before Medicine Chest purchased the former pharmacy, Neal had the opportunity to grow both as a pharmacist and businessman. "I became interested in pharmacy," he said, "because I liked the practical application of science. But as time went on, I became more and more interested in the business end." He was able to purchase three different pharmacies "and merge them into one," before it became the Medicine Chest.

Throughout his experience, Neal has seen many changes. From the business end, "it's the insurance companies. When I started off, people would pay cash. If they had insurance, they would turn it in themselves. We pretty much had control over pricing, but now most of our business is paid for by a third-party interest." What he can no longer control, however, Neal makes up with customer service. "We're still a "Mom and Pop" business — just with all the modern technology," he said. For more than four decades, Neal and his staff have served entire generations of families, taking the company slogan "Making a Difference with Service" to heart. In fact, Medicine Chest still makes deliveries to customers within the city limits of Ennis.

"We treat everyone like family," said pharmacist, Regina Whaley. "I grew up in Ennis, and I love working with the hometown people."

"We try to treat everyone fairly and care for them the way we would want to be cared for," Neal said. With a staff of just nine people, Medicine Chest is exactly what they promise to be — a pharmacy selling prescriptions, over-the-counter medicine, medical aids, such as wraps and braces "and uniforms for medical professionals. That's probably our biggest sideline."

More so, it is also the personal interest of the staff and

their devotion to Ennis which offers that hometown feel to Medicine Chest. This holiday, for example, is particularly important for Regina. "My son will be home for the holidays!" Her son is a Marine, returning home from Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California, and Regina has excitedly shared her news with family, friends and customers. "Family means everything to me," she said, including those families she has been serving for years at the pharmacy.

For Neal, an avid traveler, fisherman and collector of railroad memorabilia, there are always stories he can share with and relate to customers. Specifically, his collection of rare railroad dining car china has connected him to the Ennis community. As a board member and former chairperson to the Ennis Museum, it is yet another way to give back.

"We're still a "Mom and Pop" business — just with all the modern technology."

"We're having an Open House after the Christmas parade," Neal said. Held in an actual caboose, the annual "Coffee in the Caboose," is open to the public giving citizens an opportunity to meet neighbors, appreciate some of the rich history in Ennis and celebrate the season.

When Neal moved from Austin to Ennis in 1969, he did not know what to expect. "Oh, it was a shock," Neal laughed. The pace of downtown Ennis, then and even now, is much slower than that of Austin. "But I would never go back." The people of Ennis have become family.

Ennis Medicine Chest is located on 718 Lampasas Street. Hours are: Monday-Friday: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. For more information, call (972) 875-6521. NOW

Destined for Success

— By Kelly Kovar

For David Averett, principal of Ennis High School (EHS), educating and graduating students is the primary goal. "Student success is the whole point, getting them through high school with a diploma and a chance at a future," David said. "We want every kid to be successful."

David understands very well how an education can provide a route to career success. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and after substitute teaching following college, realized he wanted to follow in his relatives' footsteps as an educator. "In hindsight, I guess it was destiny," David mentioned. "My grandfather was a teacher, coach and a principal at Waxahachie High School. I have a great-grandfather who was a principal of a little one-room schoolhouse a long, long time ago. My grandmother was an educator, a teacher — they actually named a school after her in Waxahachie — Felty Elementary. My Uncle Larry was an art teacher at the junior college level for his entire career. My Aunt Glinda was an educator, a teacher and a counselor for 36 years. In looking back, being an educator was really a natural thing for me to do.

"I started substitute teaching in Palmer and I liked it," David explained. "The principal called me and said, 'You are good at this.'" He encouraged David to pursue an alternative certification program, and before another year was out, David was teaching science at Turner Middle School in Waxahachie, for Principal Evelyn Coleman. "Ms. Coleman was fantastic to work for, and I learned about the workings of a school from her.

"I really enjoyed the classroom, but I knew from the first that I wanted to work in administration, and I made a decision early to get started on my master's degree in administration." In the summer of '99, he began commuting, 90 miles both ways, to attend A&M Commerce. He taught for one year at Waxahachie High School, but he continued to be fascinated with the administrative aspect of education. "I spent a lot of time in the assistant principal's office, watching how they did things." When an opportunity arose to apply for an assistant principal's position in Plainview, Texas, David made the six hour drive for an interview. "I called my mom, called my grandmother, called my Aunt Glinda, said 'What should I do?' My Aunt Glinda, who was a literature teacher, said, 'Go west, young man.'"

R.C. Shipley, principal of Plainview High School, hired David as an assistant principal (AP) and within two weeks, he moved to West Texas, where he worked for three years. He finished his master's degree in 2001, while he was in Plainview.

David is an Ellis County boy though, and his heart and his love for his family, called him back to this area when an AP job at Ferris High School became available. "I was back in town (Waxahachie) living with my grandmother," David said. Before he went to Plainview, he had dated a University of North Texas student, Traci Graf. Soon after he got back, he ran into her again, and they got back together. "We started dating immediately and actually got engaged three months later." They were married the next June.

After two years at Ferris, David was hired as an AP at

Ennis High School. "I signed my contract, and I was an Ennis Lion. My wife, Traci, and I were real excited because it was a shorter drive, and she was pregnant with our son, Tyler.

"There are seminal moments in your life — graduating from high school and college, getting married, children being born," David said. One of those moments for him occurred one day when he walked into EHS. "The Ennis Independent School District (EISD) superintendent at the time, Mr. Harper, said, 'You are going to be the principal of this high school, starting in January.' That was a euphoric moment." He has been here ever since, and now he and Traci, with 4-year-old

"That is our job — to be there for those students who need us."

Tyler, and Tatum, age 2, live in Ennis.

"I am proud to be principal of this high school — it is humbling and daunting." As principal, David is responsible for not only 1,500 students, but also 172 total staff, which includes 105 teachers, as well as aides, counselors, three APs, cafeteria workers and custodians. "I think we have some really special people here; we have a great school.

"The thing I like best is being around the students. That is our job — to be there for those students who need us. That is where we make a difference. We love to see their success. Every kid can learn, and we need to be educating all kids. We are in an era of accountability, and I don't see it going away, so we have to embrace it and leave no stone unturned to do our very best with every student. If I know we are doing that, I can sleep at night. I feel good if I know we are working as hard as we can possibly work to help every kid." NOW

In The Kitchen With Teri Moore

— By Faith Browning

If Teri Moore's memories of childhood serve her correctly, she has been cooking since the first grade. "My dad inspired me to cook," she said, referring to the Saturday breakfasts he used to prepare for the family. "The first time I tried to make white gravy, the dogs wouldn't even eat it," she added with a smile. But, Teri did not give up. "My dad taught me how to do it right."

Teri remembered the birthday cake she made, as a young adult, for her dad. "The cracks were so large," she laughed. Once again, she kept trying until she got it right. Today, she loves cooking for her family and friends. "I like 'easy' during the week, and I save the more difficult recipes for the weekends." NOW

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

MOM'S CREAM STYLE CORN

2 16-oz. cans cream style corn
4 Tbsp. Philadelphia cream cheese
15 crushed crackers

1. Mix corn and cream cheese in 8 x 8-inch dish.
2. Layer top with crushed crackers.
3. Bake at 350 F for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

CHICKEN POT PIE

1 28-oz. bag frozen mixed vegetables
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
2 cans Swanson white chicken meat (Can substitute 1 whole boiled and de-boned chicken.)
2 Pillsbury pie crusts

1. Cook vegetables on stove top per the package instructions.
2. Drain and reserve some of the water into a cup.
3. Add the two soups to the heated and strained vegetables.
4. Drain chicken and add to the mixture.
5. Stir well while adding the reserved water to the consistency desired. (It dries as it cooks.)
6. Fill the pie shell with the mixture; cover with second pie shell.
7. Bake for 30-35 minutes at 350 F or until golden brown.

PEANUT BRITTLE

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup Karo syrup
1 1/2 cups raw peanuts
1 Tbsp. margarine or butter
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda

1. Combine sugar, Karo syrup and peanuts in an 8-cup glass Pyrex measuring bowl.
2. Heat in microwave for 8 minutes. Mixture will become very thick. Make sure all ingredients are mixed well. You do not want sugar clumps.
3. Add margarine/butter and vanilla to mixture; heat for 2 additional minutes in the microwave.
4. Add baking soda, stirring well.
5. Mixture will still be brown as you quickly spread the mixture onto cookie sheet.
6. Once cooled, twist the cookie sheet to break the peanut brittle into pieces.

SPICY TATER TOT CASSEROLE

1 lb. ground beef
1/4 cup onions, chopped

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1/2 cup grated cheese
1 fresh jalapeño, chopped (optional)
1 can cream of mushroom or cream of chicken soup
1 pkg. frozen tater tots
(For additional flavor, add 1/2 pkg. of Lipton Onion Soup.)

1. Brown ground beef and spread in a baking dish so meat is about ½-inch thick.
2. Sprinkle with onions (and dry onion soup mix, if desired).
3. Sprinkle the top with the grated cheese and jalapeño. Pour undiluted soup over all.
4. Add frozen tater tots on top making sure to cover completely.
5. Bake in 325-350 F oven for about 45-50 minutes or until tater tots are golden brown.

MOTHER'S BLACK-EYED PEA CASSEROLE

1 1/2 lb. ground meat
1 large onion, chopped
1 15.5-oz. can black-eyed peas
1 can RO-TEL tomatoes with chilies
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 can mushroom soup
1 can enchilada sauce
15 corn tortillas, cut in fourths
2 cups grated cheddar cheese

1. Brown the ground meat and onions; drain excess grease.
2. Add remaining ingredients, except cheese and tortillas, to the ground meat mixture; combine well.
3. Line a 9x12-inch pan with tortillas. Add a layer of mixture. Then repeat with another layer of tortillas and mixture until all tortillas and mixture have been used.
4. Bake in 350 F oven for 30 minutes or until bubbly.
5. Add grated cheese to top before serving.

MUSHROOM RICE

1/2 stick butter
1 can French onion soup
1 can beef broth
1 cup Mahatma rice (or brand of your choice)
1 large jar sliced mushrooms, drained

1. In 8 x 8-inch casserole dish, melt butter.
2. Add soups, rice and mushrooms.
3. Cook covered at 375 F for 40 minutes.

Finance NOW

How Should You Get Income From Investments?

— By Bob Irish

You can invest for at least two key reasons: growth and income. If you're looking for growth, you'll need to invest in stocks that have the potential for capital appreciation. But if you also want to get income from your investments, you've got some choices to make.

You can, of course, invest in fixed-income vehicles, such as bonds. Bonds typically pay regular interest payments, and, as long as the bond is held until maturity, the principal amount is returned, provided the issuer doesn't default — a risk you can greatly reduce by purchasing only those bonds that have received the highest grades from independent rating agencies.

However, you can also get income by investing in stocks that have a history of paying dividends — and now, since the tax rate on dividends has been cut, these investments may look even more attractive. In the short term, most common stocks will typically offer lower income than bonds or CDs. But many high-quality stocks have consistently increased their annual dividends — which means you have the potential for rising income.

That's not to say you should abandon your bonds in favor of dividend-paying stocks. No matter how high the quality of the stocks, they will still carry more investment risk — at least in terms of potential loss of principal — than high-quality bonds. So, when you're investing for income, you will likely want to choose the mix of dividend-paying stocks and bonds that best fits your individual risk tolerance and long-term goals.

Income strategies during retirement

You'll always need to know how to get income from your investments. But it's particularly important to make the right choices during your retirement years. At this time of your life, you'll need to look beyond the issue of bonds vs. stocks to a new dimension: Which sources of retirement income should you tap first?

To answer this question, you'll have to take stock on where your retirement income is coming from. You can probably anticipate drawing from three main sources: tax-deferred accounts (such as your traditional IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored plan); taxable savings and investments; and Social Security.

The exact formula you choose for getting income from these three separate pools will depend on your individual needs and circumstances. However, it may be a good idea to spend down your taxable savings before you touch your tax-deferred plans. By following this strategy, you can keep these account earnings potentially growing on a tax-deferred basis until you must start taking withdrawals at age 70 1/2.

How about Social Security?

When should you start taking these payments? Again, there's no one right answer for everyone; you'll have to weigh a variety of factors, including your other sources of income, your age at retirement and your expected life span. Keep in mind that, although you can start taking Social Security at age 62, your monthly checks will be larger if you wait until your full retirement age, which can be anywhere from 65 to 67. For every year past your normal retirement age that you delay collecting benefits, you'll get "bonus" payments, which can be substantial. Once you reach 70, you'll have earned the largest monthly payment you're going to get.

Your financial professional can help you determine the appropriate strategies for drawing on your investment income and retirement plans. Maintaining a sufficient level of income is obviously essential to your financial well being, so you'll want to make all the right moves. NOW

Bob Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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Jerry K. Wester

Caring for Your Joints

— Submitted by: Dr. Todd Moore, Fellowship Trained Sports Medicine/ Othopaedic Surgeon

A joint is the connection between two bones. Joints and their surrounding structures allow you to bend your elbows and knees, wiggle your hips, bend your back, turn your head and wave your fingers. Cartilage cushions the joints so bones do not rub together. But age, injury [even sitting the wrong way or carrying too much weight] can wear and tear your cartilage. That can lead to inflammation [arthritis] and other problems that can damage your joints.

The best way to care for your joints is to keep them and your muscles, ligaments and bones strong and stable. Here are five tips for good joint health:

Healthy Joint Tip No. 1: Watch your weight.

Keeping your weight within a healthy range is the best thing you can do for your joints. Weight-bearing joints, such as your knees, hips and back, have to support some, if not all, of your body weight. The more you weigh, the more wear and tear you put on your joints.

Healthy Joint Tip No. 2: Get moving.

Exercise can help you lose extra pounds or maintain a healthy weight. Opt for exercises that won't give your joints a pounding. Instead of step aerobics, try low-impact exercises such as swimming or bicycling.

Don't sit still! Couch potatoes, computer addicts, and anyone else who remains glued to a chair all day long, have a high risk for joint pain. Less movement means more stiffness in your joints. So get up and get moving. Change positions frequently. Take frequent breaks at work and stretch or go for a short walk. If you can't leave the office, try taking phone calls while standing.

Healthy Joint Tip No. 3: Build muscle.

Strong muscles cushion your joints. If you don't have enough muscle, your joints take a pounding, especially those in your knees, which must support your entire body weight. Building muscle keeps surrounding ligaments strong. Then your joints don't have to do all the work.

Healthy Joint Tip No. 4: Perfect your posture.

Don't slouch. Standing and sitting up straight protects your joints from your neck to your knees. Good posture also helps guard your hip joints and back muscles.

Posture is also important when lifting and carrying. For example, if you use a backpack, be sure to put it over both shoulders instead of slinging it over one. Being lopsided puts more stress on your joints. When lifting, use the biggest muscles in your body by bending at your knees instead of bending your back.

Healthy Joint Tip No. 5: Eat right.

A healthy, balanced diet helps build strong bones. Make sure you get plenty of calcium every day. You can do this by drinking plenty of milk and eating foods such as yogurt, broccoli and figs. If those foods don't tempt your taste buds, ask your doctor if calcium supplements are right for you.

Salmon is particularly beneficial for your joints. Not only is it a good source of calcium, it also contains omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s promote healthy joints and reduce joint pain and swelling in people with arthritis. Mackerel is another source of omega-3s. You can also get omega-3s by taking fish oil capsules. NOW

Todd Moore, Fellowship Trained Sports Medicine/ Othopaedic Surgeon
Ennis Regional Medical Center

What's Happening NOW

Ongoing
Feed the Children donations are being accepted at Ennis State Bank, account number 37051. Requests for assistance with groceries may be turned in at Ennis Feed the Children boxes at area businesses.

First and Third Tuesday
Ennis Cancer Support Group: 7:00 p.m., Ennis Regional Medical Center classroom. For more information, call Kathy at (972) 878-6927 or visit www.enniscancersupport.com.

Third Monday
Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. For more information, visit www.elliscountyaggiemoms.org or contact Cheryl Bell at (972) 723-0341 or rb4cj@sbcglobal.net.

First and Third Thursday
Moms Connected: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd. Free fellowship for moms of all ages. For more information, contact ennismoms@sbcglobal.net.

December 3
Junior High band performance: 6:00 p.m., Ennis Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum, 105 NE Main St.

Christmas Parade of Lights: 7:00 p.m., Downtown Ennis. Santa will be at the Railroad Museum after the parade. For more information, contact Ennis Convention and Visitor's Bureau at (972) 878-4748.

December 4 – 21
Ennis Public Theatre presents *My Favorite Christmas*, by Bill Rhoten. Fridays and Saturdays: 8:00 p.m. One matinee show. For information and reservations, call the theater at (972) 878-7529.

December 5
Breakfast with Santa: 8:00-11:00 a.m., St John Church. Tickets sold at the door.

December 12
5 Alarm Texas Country Jam, a Texas country concert promoted by the Ennis Firefighters Association Local 3320: Sokol Hall. BBQ, raffle, bands including Acoustic Sound Hounds, Wes Ball Band, Hodak Band, Ryan Turner Band and Kyle Park. For more information, visit www.effal3320.net

Bluegrass/Gospel Show: 7:00 p.m., Old Bristol Schoolhouse, 100 Church St., Bristol. Come early and join the bluegrass picker's jam from 4:00-6:00 p.m. Free admission; donations accepted. For more information, call Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

A Night in Bethlehem, a hands-on Holy Land experience: 5:00-8:00 p.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church. Families welcome.

December 13
Ellis County Toy Run, hosted by Gryphons

What's Happening NOW

Motorcycle Club. For more information, call (972) 878-4748.

December 16

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy 287 at I-35 East, Exit 401B, Waxahachie. All women are welcome for luncheon and a speaker. Cost: $13. Nursery available. Reservations preferred; walk-ins welcome. For reservations, contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com or Mary at (972) 937-9984 by December 11.

December 19

EHS Lionettes and Paw Power Booster Club host Breakfast with Santa: 8:00-11:00 a.m., First United Methodist Church. Storytelling with Mrs. Claus. Cost: $6 adults, $4 children. Pictures with Santa for an additional fee. Followed by Parents Day Out: 11:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Cost: $20 per child includes lunch, crafts, games, movies, snack and fun. For tickets, see any EHS Lionette or call Elizabeth Wester at (972) 935-7005.

December 31

Sokol New Year's Eve event: Sokol Hall, Ennis. Call Sokol for more information at (972) 875-4547.

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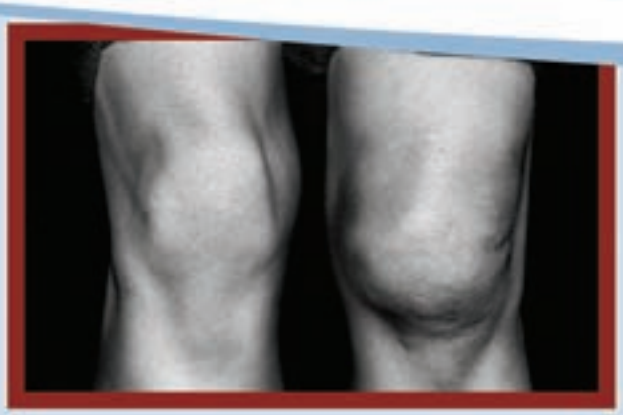

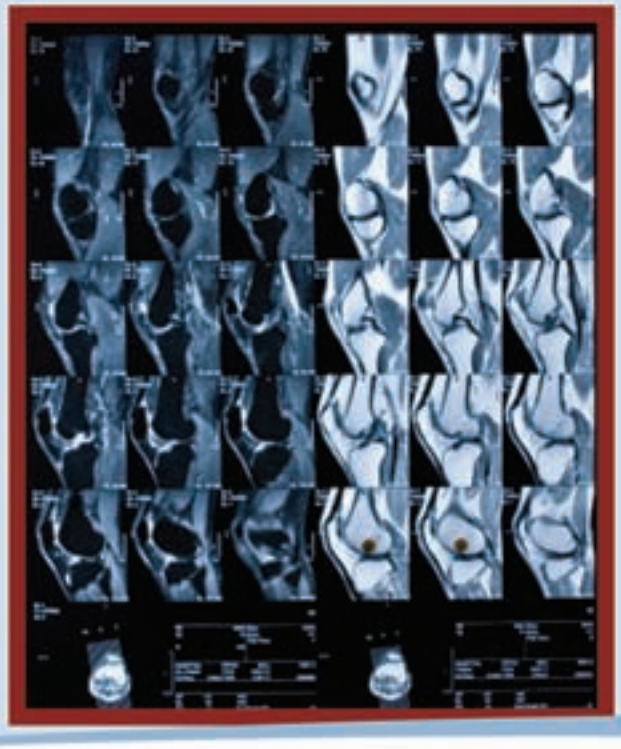

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